

Written

Government Administrative And Election Committee

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Comments H.B. 5743: An Act Concerning Disbursement From the Tobacco Settlement Fund and Money's Received From Tobacco Taxes

Good Afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, members of the Government Administration and Election Committee.

My name is John Bailey, State Director of Government Relations for the American Heart / Stroke Association, and I am here today to comment on H.B. 5743, An Act Concerning Disbursement From The Tobacco Settlement Fund and Money's Received from Tobacco Taxes.

The American Heart supports all efforts to reduce smoking in the state and reduce the health care costs associated with smoking.

Cigarette smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States claiming approximately 443,000 lives prematurely every year. Smoking not only takes the lives of those who use tobacco, but also those who are exposed to second-hand smoke. Smokeless tobacco has been linked to greater incidence of fatal heart attacks and strokes. The bottom line -- no tobacco product is safe to use.

The intent of H.B. 5743 is the right things to do even in the current budgetary climate.

In Connecticut, the pure economics of not actively reducing the population's dependency on cigarettes and tobacco products dramatically impacts the state's financial bottom line, and is not sound fiscal policy. The annual health care cost in our state directly caused by smoking is \$1.63 Billion. The direct dollars the state is spending on supporting the health care costs of those on Medicaid is \$430 Million. And smoking-caused productivity losses in Connecticut are \$1.03 Billion. The amount of money being taken out of the state's economy is astounding.ⁱ

The economic impact does not even touch upon the human toll smoking takes on the Connecticut population. Roughly 4,700 friends, family, and neighborhoods are annually taken from us too early because of health related diseases caused by tobacco use.ⁱⁱ

Connecticut is sacrificing long term health benefits and health care cost savings for short-term budget fixes. If our state had funded its tobacco control programs at the minimum or optimal levels recommended by the CDC since the Master Settlement Agreement, there could have been millions of fewer smokers just over a decade later. And the state would have realized both the economic benefits and

added worker productivity to the economy, while families would have benefited from experiencing with loved ones who succumbed to tobacco related disease the joys of everyday life experiences.

The American Heart Association supports sustainable funding for state tobacco prevention and cessation programs to levels that meet or exceed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. Tobacco control programs should be comprehensive, in accordance with CDC recommendations, constructed intelligently, staffed appropriately, and administered effectively. CDC's best practices incorporate community programs to reduce tobacco use and make smoking not the norm, robust school programs, enforcement of existing regulations and laws, statewide programs, cessation programs, counter marketing efforts, including paid broadcast and print media, media advocacy, public relations, public education, and health promotion activities, surveillance and evaluation, and administration and management.

A study by the American Lung Association showed that economic benefits to states offering comprehensive smoking cessation therapy to their employees in their public health programs or in their tobacco control programs can save \$1.10-\$1.40 in health care expenditures and productivity for every dollar spentⁱⁱⁱ

In 2012, Connecticut collected \$535 million in revenue from the 1998 tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but spent just 1.1 percent of it on tobacco prevention programs. This means Connecticut is spending just a penny of every dollar in tobacco revenue to fight tobacco use.^{iv}

By supporting HB 5743, your committee will be making an investment in the economic health in both the state's financial standing and the health of thousands of Connecticut's residents, both children and adults, who will have access to the resources needed to quite using tobacco products and the ability to live longer and more productive lives.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

ⁱ http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/connecticut

ⁱⁱ http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/connecticut

ⁱⁱⁱ Smoking Cessation Policy: The Economic Benefit: American Lung Association; September 14, 2010

^{iv} http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what_we_do/state_local/tobacco_settlement/